

IN THE CLAIMS:

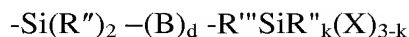
1. (Previously Presented) A method of applying a patterned thin-film onto a substrate comprising the steps:
 - i) plasma treating the substrate;
 - ii) applying a liquid coating material, comprising one or more compounds selected from the group of organopolysiloxane polymers, organopolysiloxane oligomers, siloxane resins and polysilanes, onto the substrate surface by a soft lithographic printing technique to form a patterned thin-film thereon; and
 - iii) where required, removing residual liquid coating material from the substrate surface;which process does not require the liquid coating material undergo a curing step.
2. (Previously Presented) A method of applying a patterned thin-film in accordance with claim 1 wherein the resulting patterned thin-film has a thickness in the region of from 1 to 100 nm.
3. (Previously Presented) A method of applying a patterned thin-film in accordance with claim 1 wherein step (i) is carried out utilising a suitable source selected from the group of an atmospheric pressure glow discharge source, a dielectric barrier discharge (DBD) source, a low pressure glow discharge or post discharge plasma source, a corona discharge source and/or a microwave discharge source.
4. (Previously Presented) A method of applying a patterned thin-film in accordance with claim 1 wherein the substrate to be coated is selected from metals, metal foils metal oxides, glass, carbonaceous materials, ceramics, semi-conductor materials, plastics, liquid crystals, polymeric silicon containing materials, cellulosic materials, laminates and/or photoresist materials.
5. (Previously Presented) A method of applying a patterned thin-film in accordance with claim 1 wherein the substrate is pre-treated.

6. (Original) A method of applying a patterned thin-film in accordance with claim 5 comprising the step of pretreating the substrate by introducing an atomised liquid and/or solid coating-forming material into an atmospheric pressure plasma discharge and/or an ionised/excited gas stream resulting therefrom, and exposing the substrate to the atomised coating-forming material under conditions of atmospheric pressure.
7. (Previously Presented) A method of applying a patterned thin-film in accordance with claim 1 wherein the organopolysiloxane polymers/oligomers comprise a linear, branched or cyclic organopolysiloxane or copolymers thereof or a low molecular weight silicone resin in a liquid or wax form.
8. (Currently Amended) A method of applying a patterned thin-film in accordance with claim 7 wherein the linear or branched organopolysiloxane polymers/oligomers have a general formula:

W-A-W

where A is a polydiorganosiloxane chain having siloxane units of the formula $R''_sSiO_{4-s/2}$ in which each R'' independently represents an alkyl group having from 1 to 40 carbon atoms, an alkenyl group, hydrogen; an aryl group, a halide group, an alkoxy group, an epoxy group, an acryloxy group, or an alkylacryloxy group, s has a value of 0, 1 or 2; and

W is selected from $-Si(R'')_2X$, or



where B is $-R'''-(Si(R'')_2-O)_r-Si(R'')_2-$ and

R'' is as aforesaid, R''' is a divalent hydrocarbon group, k is 0, 1, 2, or 3, r is zero a whole number between 1 and 6 and d is 0 or a whole number, X is the same as R'' or a hydrolysable group.

9. (Cancelled)
10. (Cancelled)
11. (Previously Presented) A method of applying a patterned thin-film in accordance with claim 1 wherein the soft lithographic printing technique is micro contact printing (μ CP).
12. (Previously Presented) A method of applying a patterned thin-film in accordance with claim 1 wherein subsequent to application of the liquid coating material, the patterned thin-film on the substrate is at least partially further plasma treated and/or an additional coating is applied to form a second layer on the patterned thin-film.
13. (Previously Presented) A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the method is carried out in a continuous process.
14. (Previously Presented) Use of a method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the patterned thin-film is utilised to modify the surface alignment of a liquid crystal.
15. (Previously Presented) A method in accordance with claim 12 wherein the additional coating is applied to form the second layer using a soft lithographic printing technique.
16. (Previously Presented) Use of a method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the patterned thin-film is utilised as hydrophobic tracks to control material placement during subsequent processing.
17. (Cancelled)

18. (Previously Presented) A method for modifying the alignment of a liquid crystal comprising applying a thin film onto a substrate surface in accordance with claim 1 such that the alignment of the liquid crystal is modified.
19. (Previously Presented) A substrate comprising a thin film applied in accordance with the method of claim 1.
20. (Previously Presented) A coated substrate obtainable by the method in accordance with claim 1.
21. (Previously Presented) A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein a region of the substrate surface is masked to substantially prevent or inhibit further physical or chemical changes to the previously uncoated, partially coated or fully coated substrate surface during a process step.